

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 6333

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINS, PINT, MILI, LE

SUBJECT: SYRIANN-MARONITE AGREEMENT

1. IHSAN HIJAZI, EDITOR OF "ARAB WORLD", INFORMED ME TODAY, JULY 16, THAT MARONITE DELEGATION, WHICH HAS JUST RETURNED FROM DAMASCUS, HAS FIRM AGREEMENT WITH SYRIANS TO COLLABORATE ON TAKING OVER "80 PER CENT" OF LEBANON. SOURCE OF THIS INFORMATION IS KARIM PAKRADOUNI, MEMBER OF THIS DELEGATION.

2. ACCORDING TO PAKRADOUNI, MARONITE-SYRIAN STRATEGY IS TO UNLEASH MARONITES TO COMPLETE FINAL DESTRUCTION OF TEL ZAATAR CAMP TO TAKE OVER NABAA, THUS CLEAINING OUT PRINCIPAL REMAINING POCKETS OF "DISSIDENTS" IN MARONITE-CHRISTIAN ZONE. MEANWHILE, SYRIANS WILL CONSOLIDATE AND RETAIN THEIR OCCUPATION OF REST OF LEBANON WITH EXCEPTION OF CHOUF, AND COASTAL AREA BETWEEN TYRE AND BEIRUT, INCLUDING WEST BEIRUT.

3. AT SAME TIME SYRIANS WILL CONTINUE TO CURTAIL SEVERELY INFLOW OF SUPPLIES TO MOSLEM TERRITORY (THE 20 PER CENT REFERRED TO ABOVE),

ALLOWING ONLY ENOUGH TO GETTHROUGH TO ALLOW INHABITANTS TO BARELY LIMP ALONG. ALSO, MARONITES WILL BE GIVEN FREE HAND TO CROSS DIVIDING LINE TO BEIRUT'S PORT AREA IN ORDER TO RECAPTURE HOTEL AREA AROUND

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HOLIDAY INN. WHILE THIS IS NOT STRICTLY MARONITE-INHABITED, FOR PSYCHOLOGICAL REASONS MARONITES ARE DETERMINED TO RECAPTURE THIS

TERRAIN WHICH THEY WERE FORCED TO GIVE UP EARLIER TO LEFTIST MOSLEMS. HOWEVER, HIJAZI REPORTS THAT PFLP GENERAL COMMAND HAS BUILT FORTIFICATIONS AND DUG TRENCHES IN ANTICIPATION OF ATTACK.

4. YIJAZI BELIEVES THAT IF BY SEPTEMBER PLO HAS NOT COME TO TERMS WITH SYRIANS RE PALESTINIAN PRESENCE IN LEBANON, SYRIANS PROBABLY WILL MOVE IN ON REMAINING PORTIONS OF WEST BEIRUT OUTSIDE OF HOTEL DISTRICT. IN THIS WAY SYRIANS AND MARONITES WILL REUNITE LEBANON ON THEIR OWN TERMS.

5. HE THINKS THAT MARONITES EXPECT THAT INCREASING MOSLEM DISAFFECTION FOR PALESTINIANS WILL WORK TO THEIR ADVANTAGE, FACILITATING "LIBERATION" OF WEST BEIRUT FROM PLO.

6. HIJAZI BELIEVES THAT PAKRADOUNI'S REPORT OF PROPOSED MARONITE-SYRIAN STRATEGY IS PROBABLY ACCURATE. HE DOES NOT RPT NOT THINK THAT BY SEPTEMBER THERE WILL BE A MAJOR IMPROVEMENT IN SITUATION. EVEN THOUGH ARAFAT MAY BE FORCED TO SIGN AGREEMENT WITH ASSAD ALONG LINES OF CAIRO ACCORD, LATTER IS VAGUE AND OPEN-ENDED AND WILL NOT RPT NOT PREVENT FURTHER FIGHTING AND INSTABILITY. HIJAZI PREDICTS LEBANESE CRISIS IS IN FOR LONG HAUL.

7. HIJAZI ALSO SUBScriIES TO VIEW THAT SYRIANS ARE FOLLOWING CAREFUL BALANCING ACT BETWEEN MOSLEMS AND MARONITES. AT SOME POINT, GIVEN CURRENTLY STRONG MARONITE POSITION, SYRIANS WILL PROBABLY SHIFT THEIR SUPPORT FROM CHRISTIANS IN ORDER TO CURRY FFAVOR WITH MOSLEMS AND PLO. MEANWHILE, HIJAZI BELIEVES THAT MARONITES ARE NO MORE COMMITTED TO CLOSE RELATIONSHIP WITH SYRIANS THAN ARE THE SYRIANS, AND WILL INCREASINGLY CHAFE UNDER SYRIAN DOMINATION OF LEBANON.

8. HIJAZI SAYS THAT TALK OF PARTITION ON MARONITE SIDE IS NOW DISAPPEARING AS MARONITES SEE OPPORTUNITY TO EXTEND THEIR HEGEMONY, IN TANDEM WITH SYRIANS, OVER REST OF LEBANON.

9. HIJAZI MADE THE OBVIOUS POINT THAT PALESTINE PROBLEM IN LEBANON WILL NEVER BE SOLVED UNTIL PALESTINIANS ARE OFFERED THEIR OWN STATE ON WEST BANK.

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10. COMMENT. WE HAVE HAD OTHER REPORTS TO CORROBORATE HIJAZI'S DESCRIPTION OF LATEST MARONITE-SYRIAN AGREEMENT. IT APPEARS PLAUSIBLE. THIS MAY BE A MORE REALISTIC ASSESSMENT OF WHAT IS LIKELY TO HAPPEN IN LEBANON OVER COMING FEW MONTHS THAN OPTIMISTIC PROGNOSTICATIONS I HAVE BEEN GIVEN BY CERTAIN OTHER LEBANESE IN LAST FEW DAYS.
SEELYE

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